

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

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CONYERS, RANGEL, McDERMOTT, ABERCROMBIE, STARK, AND JOHN LEWIS:
“BUSH THREAT OF WAR REQUIRES NEW MILITARY DRAFT SYSTEM”

Today, Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee and Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus, joined Congressman Charles Rangel, Ranking Member of the House Ways & Means Committee, in introducing a bill to reinstate mandatory military service and issued the following statement:

“As our nation beats the drums of war against Iraq, I fear we have begun to view armed conflict far too lightly. It has unfortunately become the duty of someone else’s child to go to war and die as the privileged evade the tragic consequences of war. In this time of national unity and patriotism, I believe that it is time we call on the better angels of the American spirit and return to the ideal of shared sacrifice.

It is an unfortunate reality that African Americans represent 21% of the military as opposed to 13% of the civilian age population; so they are vastly over represented in the military. It is also an unfortunate reality that many elected leaders who make the decisions to send others to war have no experience serving in war themselves and have no children in the military.

Mandatory military service is necessary for our national security. This Administration faces crises in as many as three theaters of war as instability runs rampant in Afghanistan, troops are mobilized to Iraq, and North Korea pursues nuclear weapons. We may well need more troops to fight on all of these fronts. The time to be prepared is not tomorrow, it is now.”

Mr. Conyers took issue with claims by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld that the bill was unnecessary because of the problems with the fairness of the draft during the Vietnam War and the fact that our military is already sufficiently large:

“Our bill would eliminate the deferments and exemptions that plagued the Vietnam draft. Every one would be obligated to serve in the Army or to perform civilian service that promotes national or homeland security. No longer would enrollment in college be a reason to avoid the draft. With regard to the size and strength of our military, I would note that if we had sufficient